Fact-Idea List – Example

Analysis of Affirmative Action Debate

Prompt: To what extent does affirmative action constitute a “disguised quota” system in higher education today?

Thesis: Affirmative action constitutes a “disguised quota” insofar as it transgresses the Constitution’s promise of equality for all citizens under the law.

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| Proposition 209 passed in California. | • UC system promotes meritocracy  
• Many oppose affirmative action |
| Affirmative action gives admissions priority to students of color. | • Race trumps issues of academic preparation  
• Students of certain racial minority groups are disadvantaged in admissions processes |
| Supreme Court ruled in the 1978 Bakke case that race could be used as a factor in college admissions, but that UC Davis could not hold a quota of places for minority students. | • Legal precedent suggests that affirmative action is fair  
• Supreme Court only hears cases of significance  
• Affirmative action is an important issue  
• Summer 2003 ruling reinforces the idea that students of certain races are educationally disadvantaged |
| President Bush called affirmative action a “disguised quota.” | • The President’s opinion influences the public.  
• Conservative politicians see affirmative action as unfair |
| Jennifer Gratz was denied admission to law school at the University of Michigan based on a point scale used for admissions processes that assigns 20 extra points to applicants from racial minority groups. | • White students need a higher GPA than racial minority students for admission to colleges and universities that use race as a factor in admissions.  
• With affirmative action, lesser-qualified minority applicants are admitted over white students with better qualifications. |
| The Constitution mandates equality for all Americans under the law. | • Racial neutrality is implicit in the message of equality espoused in the Constitution. |
| Proponents of affirmative action and point-based admissions systems that privilege race argue that a “critical mass” of minority students is needed to promote diversity on college campuses. | • Critical mass is a relative concept that is open to debate.  
• Quotas and critical mass arguments are one and the same.  
• Fundamentally, quotas create resentment on campus and do not foster an academically or racially diverse campus environment. |